

## Genesis Chapters 29-30 Summary - John Karmelich

One of the positive things about getting older is perspective. We can see how ways God has guided us through difficult situations for His glory. We figure out that tough times are when He's "molding" us to be the kind of person God desires that we become. In these chapters, we get a 20-year time span, where the main character goes from being single to having 12 children through 4 women. Eleven of them are boys and became the 12 tribes of Israel. The 12th son comes in a future chapter. As most of you know, learning ancient history isn't nearly as important to me as how to apply the bible to our lives today. As I studied these chapters the word perspective kept popping into my head. Christians should understand the origins of the 12 tribes of Israel, but it's a secondary issue here. My desire is to consider our lives to date and ponder how He's been guiding us. Most of us have suffered through lots of tough things in our lives. God hasn't gotten us this far to "let us down now"! That's a secret to happiness as we go through life. Anyway, give that a little thought to your life to date as I tell the story of these two chapters:

When we left off in Chapter 28, the main character Jacob was on the run for his life as his twin brother threatened to kill him and despite the fact Jacob lied to his father's face, his father told him to travel all the way to where his grandfather grew up to find a wife for himself. It is logical that the parents didn't tell Jacob's twin brother. Jacob traveled about good 500 miles to the family of his mom to see if he can find a bride. All he knew was he had an uncle named Laban who's going to be a major character in the next few chapters. We'll see how Laban's personality is a lot like Jacob!

When Jacob got to that area, he found some young men sitting by a watering hole. They didn't start the sheep watering process as they said they couldn't move the big rock covering the hole. Jacob asked the men if they knew who Laban was (his mom's brother). They said yes and also said his daughter Rachel was coming to water Laban's sheep. I suspect those men were waiting for Rachel as she is cute! When Rachel showed up, Jacob had superhuman strength to lift the boulder by himself. Since Rachel was the girl Jacob wanted, he kissed her, (much of the world kisses on both cheeks as a sign of affection) as an introduction. Rachel probably thought, "I need to go run home to tell dad what just happened"! Laban (again Rachel's father) last encounter with that family was when Abraham's servant (the grandfather of Jacob) gave their family lots of valuable gifts and his sister Rebekah left to be Jacob's mom. My guess is Laban thought, "I'll check this guy out to see if he's financially marriage material for my daughter!"

Once Jacob was there for a month and I'm sure he helped with chores. Laban thought let's see what the guy really wants! Realize that Rachel was beautiful, and her older sister didn't have the good looks that Rachel had as that's a key plot point! Jacob then told Laban, "I want to marry Rachel, and I'll work for seven years for that privilege." In that culture, a man must pay a price to the father of the bride so if the daughter comes back the price covers the shame. Then one of the most romantic lines in the bible says that the seven years seemed like a few days because Jacob loved Rachel so much.

Time for the plot twist. In that culture a bride was covered from head to toe, so the groom couldn't see her till well, let's be blunt, till they "did it" together. When the light of day hit, Jacob found out that he married the older sister Leah. That means both Rachel and Leah had to be in on the plot. When Jacob woke up, I'm willing to bet the first thing that popped in his head was when Jacob lied to his father that he was really his brother Esau. Now the "chickens are coming home to roost" as the lie caught up with him that he was tricked just as Jacob tricked his father and must live with it. The good news is Jacob is also going to get Rachel as a bride immediately, but it cost him seven more years of free labor! Realize each wife got a "slave girl" as a wedding gift from dad. Messed up families are as old as Genesis!

The bible doesn't strictly forbid two marriages, but every story in the bible that has more than one wife, always caused problems for the husband! I'll leave it at that!

Now that the marriage story is done, time for children. Despite the fact Jacob loved Rachel at least he's sleeping with both. God knew Leah was unloved and well, opened her womb, so she was cranking out children like there was no tomorrow! If memory was right, six of the 12 boys that became the 12 tribes of Israel were Leah's children. Rachel was so ticked off that she wasn't having any, she made Jacob do the marriage thing with her slave girl and she had children. Leah also got in the act and did the same! I should point out that Rachel had two children herself (with the youngest coming in the next lesson). I'd think that Jacob had to be worn out at this point deciding to sleep with. We know he was fertile! There is an interesting side story of Leah's oldest son finding an unusual fruit (grows out the ground) while he was working at the harvest season. Leah agreed to give that fruit to Rachel in exchange for Leah doing the "sexual thing" that night with Jacob! I admit, I picture Jacob running around thinking whose turn is it and who's not pregnant! The final score was boys 11, girls 1! However, in Genesis 37:25, it says that Jacob had other daughters, but they weren't mentioned elsewhere!

Now that the family records are set. One has to admit, this bible study reads like an obituary for Jacob, as it lists family members by name. The interesting thing is one can see despite the strange way that it formed, Jacob now has 4 wives and at least 11 children at this point! Speaking of obituaries, now that we got the "who's who" of this family established, it's time to talk about Jacob's career. By Chapter 30 Verse 25, Jacob's tired. Wouldn't you be with four wives and all those kids? Anyway, he desired to go back home and see his parents after 14 years. Grandpa Laban at this point knew he couldn't force Jacob to stay longer, and Laban realized he was being blessed financially by how hard Jacob worked, so he is going to ask Jacob to stay longer and "name his price".

Then we get a strange story how Jacob separated the less valuable farm animals (those not of one color as the wool sells for more) and Jacob said I'll keep all the bad ones and you Laban get the good ones as I'll work another six years under those conditions. Then the story tells how Jacob bred them, so he got more sheep and goats. We'll read in the next chapter God told him in a dream how to increase the size of his flock using a strange method involving peeling certain types of tree bark to expose the white. It's not known if this is an old shepherd trick or just a way for God to instruct Jacob. Bottom line, it works in the story and after 20 years Jacob was now ready to leave with a big family and a lot of wealth!

OK John, nice "obituary". Other than learning the dangers of multiple wives and the danger of lying is that it'll come home to roost one day, what are we to learn from this story? For starters, a reminder God is always guiding our lives although the only significant mention of God is when Rachel complained of no children all Jacob said in effect was, "That's God's business as you can see, I'm very fertile!" What I and most people have found as we get older is how God's been guiding us the whole time and teaching us lessons the whole way! Remember what God's goal for us is, to draw close to Him and be a witness to Him to the world around us! I find that God allows us to go through tough times to teach us ways to be more obedient to the way He wants us to live! As an example, I recently went through a tough time in my life. The good news is I stopped reflected on it, saw the pattern that was causing my errors and I suspect it will draw me closer to God than to repeat that mistake yet again! As most of us know, we do learn much more from our mistakes than our successes in life!

So as we study Jacob's life and see the patterns over these 20 years, take a little time every so often for a time of reflection and see what God is trying to teach you to draw closer to Him! With that said, as I usually end these lessons, hope you liked it. I wrote a more detailed one

some years back. If you want to read that, click on the other links where you got this study!  
Thanks for reading. John